



SUMMER 2000

Louisiana COASTLINES

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Atchafalaya Basin Welcome Center Plans Approved

The state Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has announced the completion of the building design for the Atchafalaya Welcome Center to be constructed at the Butte LaRose exit off Interstate 10. The new \$3 million center is one of a number of planned projects developed under DNR's Atchafalaya Basin Program.

The visitor's center will feature an exhibit hall, a theater, and a swamp garden with alluring pavilions, ponds and display space. Architect John "Ike" Capdevielle of Baton Rouge led the design team responsible for building construction plans and landscape features. "This visitor's center is unlike any other, it invites the traveler to behold the charm and beauty of southern,

Acadian-style living," said Atchafalaya Basin Program Executive Director Sandra Thompson Decoteau. Once constructed, the welcome center will be operated by the state's Office of Tourism, she said. DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell said the center will be the best and most talked about "from Jacksonville to San Diego".

The existing rest area facilities at Butte La Rose will be torn-down, and the new welcome center construction will take place on the south side of the interstate. On the north side of the interstate, truck and bus parking will be available. The landscaping will include an oak alley while the present war memorial located at the rest stop will become a part of the entrance. A



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pathway will connect the north and south areas.

The state Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) has agreed to pay all construction costs for the facility, including a boat landing, and the truck parking facilities on the north side. "We are extremely pleased to be able to partner with DNR, using Enhancement and/or Interstate Maintenance Funds to provide such a great facility for motorists," Dr. Kam Movassaghi, DOTD Secretary said. DNR will be responsible for surveying, engineering, architectural, and landscape design costs on the project.

State officials must obtain the final approval from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) before bids

are let and construction starts. Decoteau says she anticipates the approval process to take about six months but that work should begin in spring 2001.

Go to www.dnr.state.la.us/sec/atchafalaya/index.ssi to see the present layout and design plans for the Atchafalaya Basin Welcome Center. Then later on follow the construction as it takes place on DNR's web site!

Drawing provided by Capdevielle Losavio Architects. For more information, contact Sandra Thompson Decoteau at 225-342-0560 or DNR Public Information at 225-342-8955.

Group Seeks Solutions to Marsh die-off

The state is facing another critical development along its eroding coastline — dying salt marsh. The die-off of large areas of marsh grass sends up a warning for many coastal officials.

Since the Spring of 2000, scientists and coastal specialists have found that saltwater marsh plants in a vast area in the southeastern part of the state have prematurely turned brown, lost leaves and, in some cases, experienced root death. This marsh vegetation, *Spartina alterniflora*, known as smooth cordgrass, is a vital link in the wetland's ecosystem. Present estimates show that several thousand acres have been affected, but the most critical browning of salt marshes is in the Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary between the Mississippi and Atchafalaya rivers.

Representatives of the Foster Administration, several state and

federal environmental agencies, landowners, and university researchers met recently to review the latest findings on the dying marsh grass phenomenon. Attendees agreed to immediately convene a working group. Dr. Paul Coreil, Assistant Director for Environmental Affairs at the LSU Ag Center said that the working group members would offer insight, expertise, and assistance in dealing with this latest coastal threat.

According to the Executive Director of the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities, Dr. Len Bahr, the next strategy meeting is planned for September 14, 2000 at 9:00 a.m. in the Louisiana Room of the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries, 2000 Quail Drive, Baton Rouge. For more information on this topic, contact the Governor's Office of Coastal Activities at 225-342-3968.



NOAA Biologists Install Unique Pilot Project On Louisiana's Chandeleur Islands

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service and the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources recently installed a first-of-a-kind habitat restoration test project on Louisiana's Chandeleur Islands. The project, which included the installation of 1,500 smooth cordgrass plants (*Spartina alterniflora*), is unique because it will provide specific information on the most effective way to restore the islands and, ultimately, protect important wetlands. "This is the kind of innovative work we need to protect Louisiana's coastal wetlands," said Penny Dalton, the director of NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.

For the test phase, federal and state partners worked with staff from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to plant three sites. These sites, all located on the north half of the island chain, are subject to the prevailing wind and overwash from the ocean. At the end of the summer, scientists will determine which planting design worked best based on the conditions. Then, that data will be used to design the main part of the Chandeleur restoration project which will include the installation of more than 100,000 plants in the spring of 2001.

"We recognize that the coastal environment is ecologically stressed. By using this test phase approach we'll find out what areas and elevations are most appropriate for planting," said Rick Hartman, the NOAA Fisheries Service branch chief in Baton Rouge, La. "The pilot project will help us save time and money and ultimately ensure the success of next year's major planting effort on the Chandeleur Islands."

In the main phase of the planting, the partners will plant 364 acres of cordgrass on numerous shallow areas of the islands to stabilize un-vegetated areas which will trap sediment creating an additional 70 plus acres of marshes. Additionally, the project will protect up to 30 acres of the main island's habitat through wave reduction and sediment trapping. Over time, the project is expected to restore 450 acres of habitat on the islands, which will help maintain this critical barrier island.

"The Chandeleur Islands may be the last of an old delta, but it is our first line of defense against hurricanes and damaging storms in the Pontchartrain Basin," said Department of Natural Resources Secretary Jack Caldwell. The Chandeleur Islands project was funded under the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act (Breaux Act). It is notable that the Chandeleur planting is the first Breaux Act project to receive construction approval under the new cash-flow process. The goal of this process is to build high potential restoration projects faster.

The Chandeleur Islands are a 72-kilometer-long barrier island chain located in easternmost St. Bernard and Plaquemines parishes. The islands are bounded by the Gulf of Mexico to the north, south and east, and by Chandeleur and Breton sounds to the west.

The islands comprise the remnant land mass of a 2,500 year old delta abandoned by the Mississippi River during one of its many changes in

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course since the last ice age. In 1998, Hurricane Georges passed within five miles of the islands and created more than 100 washover channels through the barrier chain. Evaluation of post-storm periods dating to 1853 shows elevated rates of shoreline retreat of the barrier chain. A limited window of opportunity exists to take low-cost measures that will stabilize the islands; and which a vegetative planting project will achieve this goal.

Enacted in 1990, the Coastal Wetlands Planning Protection and Restoration Act provides funds for protecting, restoring and preserving threatened coastal wetlands, primarily in Louisiana. Currently, NOAA

Fisheries and other partners are implementing large-and small-scale restoration projects benefitting more than 80,000 acres with approximately \$75 million in project funding.

More information on the project is available on the NOAA Restoration Center home page, <http://www.nmfs.gov/habitat/restoration/cwppra/chandeleurisland.htm>.

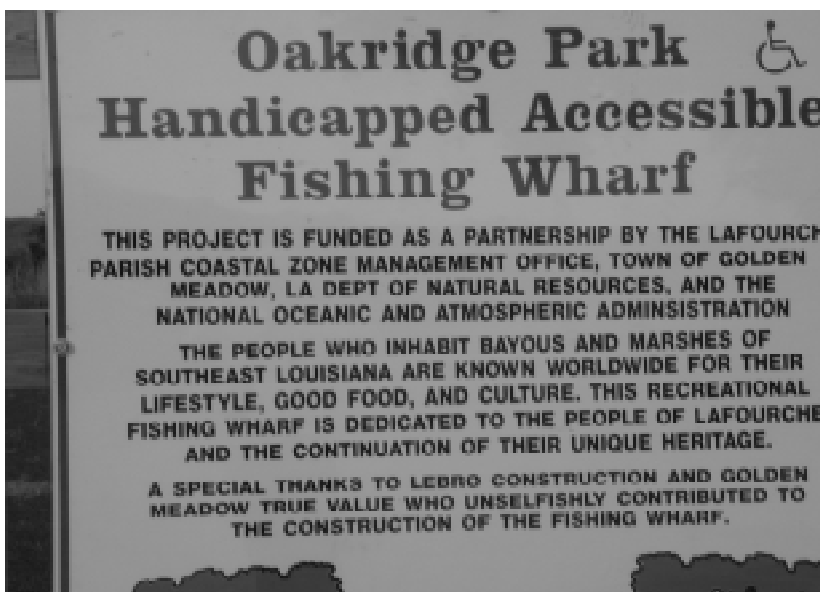
You can also obtain more on this topic by contacting DNR Public Information Officer Phyllis Darensbourg at 225-342-8955 or Kate Naughten, NOAA Fisheries 301-713-2370.

Golden Meadow Dedicates New Fishing Wharf

The good folks down the bayou in Golden Meadow were in the celebrating mode this July, even though the sweltering summer heat was bearing down on them. The celebration meant that citizens of this quaint fishing community, the people of Lafourche parish, and visitors, now had yet another great fishing hole!

Dedication ceremonies for the Lafourche Oakridge Park Handicapped Fishing Wharf in Golden Meadow were held on July 19th and local leaders and state coastal officials were there to talk about and visit the site. Grady Galliano, Lafourche's Coastal Zone Management Program Administrator hosted the event and DNR's Coastal Management Division Project Manager Jon Truxillo represented the department.

Galliano said that "*Working Together, Progress Will Prevail*" maybe the parish council's motto, but it also applies to the success of building 306A projects, like the newly-built wharf. Port Fouchon Director and Lafourche's CZM Committee Chairman Ted Falgout told those gathered for the ceremony that Lafourche parish has built more 306A projects than any other coastal parish in the state. The town's Mayor Joey





Group in attendance at the dedication ceremonies for the Oakridge Park Fishing Wharf in Golden Meadow on July 16, 2000.

Bouziga thanked all the governmental agencies and community volunteers for their combined efforts in bringing the project to completion. He said the wharf is a now special place for the townspeople and wheelchair-bound citizens to enjoy.

The state's Coastal Management Division has assisted local coastal communities in obtaining NOAA federal funding, called Section 306A, for over five years. These funds provide for small construction projects that give citizens better access to coastal resources for personal and recreational use. Local matching funds are required. The Oakridge Park project was approved at a cost of \$18,000.

For more information on coastal zone Section 306A grants, please contact Jon Truxillo at 225-342-3394.

UPCOMING COASTAL WORKSHOP SPONSORED BY CRCL

THIS FALL FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE STATE'S COASTAL WETLANDS BY JOINING THE COALITION TO RESTORE COASTAL LOUISIANA (CRCL) AT A WORKSHOP AT WEST POINTE A LA HACHE LOCATED IN PLAQUEMINES PARISH. EXPLORE THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND SURROUNDING MARSHES BY BOAT AND SEAPLANE. TO PARTICIPATE, CALL THE COALITION AT 1-888-LACoast.

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2000

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CARA Bill Heads To U.S. Senate Floor

It hasn't been smooth sailing for the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA), but its progress has been steady. The bill now heads to the Senate floor after passing the U.S. Senate Energy Committee with a 13 to 7 vote. Nine Democrats and four Republicans voted for the bill.

The proposed legislation will fund a variety of conservation projects across the country including \$171 million for projects in Louisiana to protect coastlines, save wildlife, and purchase land for parks. In June, the House approved a similar bill, with Louisiana's revenue share amounting to over \$300 million.

Louisiana congressional members and DNR Secretary Jack Caldwell have played a significant role in the uphill fight for bringing federal offshore oil and gas royalties to Louisiana and other coastal states. Representatives Billy Tauzin and Chris John led the House floor crusade earlier this year. Senator Landrieu pushed hard for the bill in the Energy Committee. The Senate leadership—Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi is expected to lead the full-Senate charge in September. Minority Leader Tom Dashiell (D-SD) and President Clinton are other key supporters of CARA.



Loran Coordinates Posted for Fishermen's Gear Program

In accordance with the provisions of R.S. 56:700.1 et. seq., notice is given that 25 claims were received during the period May 1 through July 31, 2000. There were 14 claims paid in the amount of \$64,494.21 and two claims denied.

Loran Coordinates of reported underwater obstructions are:

26603	46977	Cameron Parish
26631	46980	Cameron Parish
27473	46963	Iberia Parish
28854	46994	St. Bernard Parish
28171	46937	Terrebonne Parish
28659	46854	Jefferson Parish
28554	46879	Jefferson Parish
28631	48869	Plaquemines Parish
28775	46845	Jefferson/Plaquemines Parish

A list of claimants and amounts paid, can be obtained from Verlie Wims, Administrator, Fishermen's Gear Compensation Fund, P.O. Box 94396, Baton Rouge, LA 70804 or call DNR (225)342-0122.

Correction

In the CoastLines Spring 2000 edition, it was reported on page 7 that Dr. Mark Ford was a research professor at LSU's Earth Ecology Institute. However, Dr. Ford is president/ecologist of The Earth Ecology Institute, Inc., a non-profit research and educational institute, not affiliated with the university. CoastLines regrets the error.

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